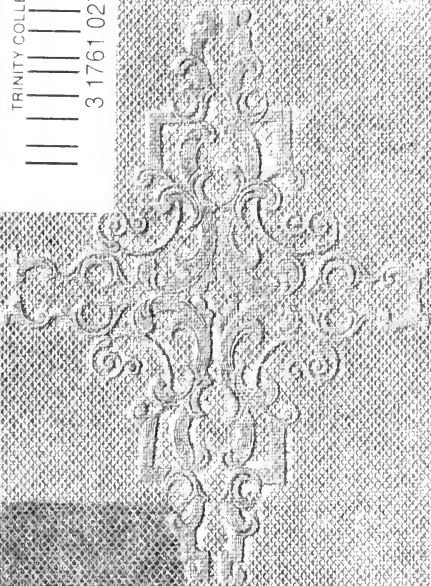


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AN ANALYSIS

OF

BR. BUTLER'S

ANALOGY OF RELIGION,

Natural and Revealed,

TO THE

CONSTITUTION & COURSE OF NATURE.

BY

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THE EDITOR'S PREFACE

THE ANALOGY of Bishop Butler is confessedly difficult of apprehension to the ordinary reader. To be understood at all, it requires much thought and study; and he who thinks of making himself master of the work, without devoting his best energies to the task, will probably find that his time has been spent to no purpose. This must be attributed in part, no doubt, to the abstract nature of the subjects discussed, and to the subtilty of the arguments employed; but partly also to the obscurity of the style, which arises from the great anxiety of the writer to guard against every objection, both open and latent, which could possibly be urged by an opponent.

It is hoped therefore that this attempt to render the ANALOGY more generally accessible, may not be deemed either unnecessary or presumptuous. Amidst the growing intelligence of the times, it is of the greatest importance that the minds of the young should be pre-occupied by Truth against the sophistries of error; and if, by an elementary work like the present, the arguments of an immortal treatise like Bishop

Butler's can be brought to bear upon those whom otherwise they would not have reached, much good may be effected, and the way prepared for a fuller and more accurate knowledge of natural and revealed religion.

In preparing a second edition for the press, great care has been taken in the revision of the whole work ; and the Editor commends it once more to the public, as designed by no means to supersede, but to prepare the way for, the ANALOGY.

January 4, 1850.

THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

PROBABLE evidence differs from demonstrative in admitting degrees, which vary from the lowest presumption to the highest moral certainty. We cannot indeed upon a slight presumption affirm a thing to be probably true, because there may be probabilities against it : and even if there be not, conviction does not ensue. The slightest presumption however is of the nature of probability, because when often repeated it amounts to moral certainty. Thus, the ebbing of the tide to-day affords the lowest presumption that it will ebb to-morrow ; but having done so for ages, we are fully assured that it will do so again.

That which constitutes probability, is expressed by the word *likely* ; that is, like some truth or true event. For when we determine that an event will probably come to pass, we do so from remarking in it a likeness to some similar event that has already happened under similar circumstances, and at like distances of time

and space. Hence our belief that a child will at manhood attain to maturity, that food will sustain its life, and the want of it cause its destruction. And thus the prince, who had lived in a warm climate, believed the congelation of water to be impossible, because he had always noticed the contrary. We from analogy presume that there may be frost in England on any given day in January ; probably, during the month ; we are morally certain that there will be frost some part or other of the winter.

Probable evidence is naturally imperfect, and relative to beings only of finite capacities ; for nothing can be probable to an infinite Intelligence. To us, probability is the guide of life. Hence, in questions of difficulty, where other evidence cannot be obtained, the least presumption on one side will, if opposed by nothing on the other, determine a question in speculative matters ; and in practical, will influence the conduct even in cases of the greatest doubt. For surely a man is bound to do what on the whole appears to be for his happiness, as much as what he knows with certainty to be so. And in matters of great consequence, a reasonable man will remark even lower probabilities and will act with vigour, not only where the chances are even, but where there is a probability against his succeeding^a.

It is not my intention to enter further into the nature of probability, or to guard against the errors to which reasoning by analogy is liable. I shall not pretend to say how far this reasoning may be reduced

^a See Chap. vi. Part II.

to general heads, and formed into a system. But though little has hitherto been attempted by those who have treated of the intellectual powers, we may still rest assured that analogy is of weight in various degrees towards determining our judgment or practice. Nor does it cease to be of weight in those cases, because others may be found in which it confessedly has none. It is sufficient to observe, that this mode of arguing is just, natural, and conclusive. Hence the remark of Origen, that he who believes Scripture to have proceeded from the Author of Nature, may expect to find in it the same difficulties as are found in the constitution of things. To which it may be added, that he who denies the Scripture to have been from God, may for the same reason deny that the world was formed by Him. On the other hand, if there be an analogy or likeness between Revelation and nature, this is a presumption that both have the same Author and cause.

To form our notions of the government of the world upon unfounded reasoning, is to build upon hypothesis, like Descartes. To form our notions upon reasoning from certain principles applied to doubtful cases, is a similar error. But it is just to join abstract reasoning with the observation of facts, and to argue from things known to others like them; from the visible divine government, and from what is present, to what is likely to be hereafter. This method being practical, and evidently conclusive in various degrees, my design is to apply it to the subject of religion, natural and revealed; taking for proved, that there is an intelligent Author of Nature, and natural Governor of the world.

But, as there are some who, instead of attending to the actual constitution of nature, form their notions of God's government upon hypothesis ; so there are others, who vainly conjecture how the world might possibly have been framed upon a more perfect model. Now if we suppose a man to go on in his reveries till he has fixed upon some plan which appears the best, might we not conclude even beforehand that such a plan would not be to his mind the *very* best, either as encouraging virtue, or as productive of the greatest happiness, or as tending to both ? And what would be the amount of these improvements ! There would be no stopping until we came to some such conclusion as this ; that all creatures should at first be made as perfect and happy as possible, that no danger should be thrown in their way, that they should in the end do what was right and most conducive to happiness, and that the whole method of government by punishments should be rejected as absurd and contrary to happiness.

Without considering the details of this plan, it may be sufficient to say that we have not faculties for this kind of speculation ; for though we can determine some ends to be absolutely preferable to others,—and we must conclude that the ultimate end designed by Providence is the greatest virtue and happiness,—yet we cannot judge what particular disposition of things is most friendly to virtue, or what means might be absolutely necessary to produce the most happiness in such a system as our world. So far are we from being judges of this, that we cannot even judge what may be the necessary means of raising even one person to

the highest perfection and happiness ; and we find that men of different education and ranks are not even competent judges of each other's conduct. Our whole nature leads us to ascribe all moral perfection to God ; and hence we conclude that virtue will ultimately be the happiness, and vice the misery, of every creature ; that order and regularity will finally prevail, though we are unable to judge how this will be accomplished. Let us then turn our thoughts to what we experience to be the conduct of nature ; and let us compare the known course of things with the moral system of nature, and see whether they are not analogous, and may not both be traced to the same general laws, and the same principles of divine conduct.

This analogy is of wide extent, and consists of several parts, more or less exact ; in some cases, amounting to proof ; in others, to confirmation of what may be proved other ways. With respect to religion, analogy will prove that it is not a subject of ridicule, unless the system of nature be so likewise. And it will answer almost all objections against the system of natural and revealed religion, and in some measure the objections against its evidence.

The idea of a Divine Government comprehends several particulars ; that there will be a future state of rewards and punishments, according to our behaviour here ; that our present life is a state of probation, trial, and discipline ; that this world lieth in wickedness and ruin, and that in consequence of man's corruption there was occasion for a further Revelation, unfolding a dispensation carried on by a Mediator, in order to the recovery of mankind ; and proved not by

the strongest evidence, but by such only as the wisdom of God thought fit.

The design of this treatise is to shew that the principal parts objected to in the Christian dispensation are analogous to what is experienced in the constitution of things, and might with equal truth be alleged against it; and that this argument from analogy is in general unanswerable, and of great weight on the side of religion, notwithstanding all objections to the contrary.

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PART I

OF NATURAL RELIGION

CHAPTER I.

Of a Future Life.

From the various changes we have undergone, and the different states of life in which we have existed from infancy to mature age, the analogy of nature suggests to us the probability that we may exist hereafter in a state as different from our present as it is from our former. Indeed the very possession of living powers before death leads us to infer their retention hereafter, unless we have some positive reason for supposing that death will be their destruction. But if there be any apprehension of this kind, it must arise either from the reason of the thing, or from the analogy of nature. But we cannot argue from the reason of the thing, because we know not what death is, but merely what are its effects, which do not at all imply the destruction of a living agent. And

besides, as we do not know on what the existence of our living powers depends, nothing is more certain than that the reason of the thing shews us no connection between death and their destruction. Nor does the analogy of nature afford the slightest presumption that animals ever lose their living powers: for though death removes the sensible proof of their existence, we cannot thence infer that it causes their annihilation.

As it is difficult however to silence imagination so as to allow reason to be heard, we will consider the weight of those presumptions which teach us to regard death as our destruction. And,

I. If death be the destruction of living beings, it must be because they are compounded and therefore discriptible. But as consciousness is indivisible, so also is its subject. For were the motion of any particle of matter absolutely one and indivisible, so that it would be a contradiction to suppose part to move and part to be at rest, then its power of motion would be indivisible, and its subject also, namely, the particle of matter in which that power inheres; for if it could be divided, one part might move and one not, which is contrary to the hypothesis. In like manner, as perception is indivisible, the perceptive power is indivisible, and consequently the subject, or conscious being in which it resides. Now granting a living being to be thus one,

our bodies are no more ourselves than any other matter. And it is as easy to conceive how the matter of our bodies may be appropriated to our use, as how we can receive impressions from, or have power over, any foreign matter. It is as easy to conceive that we may exist out of bodies as in them: that we might animate differently organized bodies: and that the dissolution of our bodies will no more deprive us of our faculties, than the dissolution of any extraneous matter whatever.

II. Though the individuality of a living agent cannot be proved by experiment, still we may conclude that our bodies are no part of ourselves: for we see men lose their limbs, and even the greatest part of their bodies, without ceasing to be living agents. And indeed the constant flux of bodies teaches us to distinguish between ourselves, and the corporeal matter which is constantly alienated, while we remain one and the same being.

This general observation leads to the following.

First, we cannot determine the bulk of the living being each man calls himself: and yet, if it be not greater than the elementary and indissoluble particles of matter, we cannot suppose that death will cause its destruction, even though it be not absolutely indiscerptible.

Secondly, from our relation to corporeal matter, and our subsequent alienation from it, the

living agents, ourselves, remaining undestroyed, notwithstanding such alienation, we cannot infer any other system of matter to be ourselves. For having already lost a great part or the whole of our bodies, why may we not survive the loss of the whole again, when our bodies are dissolved by death?

Thirdly, if we consider our bodies as made up of organs of perception and motion, we shall come to the same conclusion. Thus we find from observation that we see with our eyes, as we see with glasses, for the eye is not itself a percipient; and the same applies to our other senses. This is confirmed by instances of persons losing some of their organs of sense, while they themselves remained unimpaired: and also by the example of dreams, which prove the possession of a latent power of perceiving sensible objects without our external organs, in as lively a manner as with them.

In like manner, with respect to our power of directing motion by will or choice, the destruction of a limb does not lessen this active power, neither is there any appearance of our limbs being endued with a self-directing faculty, though they are adapted, like parts of a machine, to be the instruments of motion to each other; nor again, is there any probability that the destruction of these instruments will prove the destruction of the perceiving agents.

But it is said, all this applies equally to brutes, and therefore they must be immortal. This however is groundless: for, first, suppose brutes to become rational and moral agents,—what then? We know not what latent powers they may be endued with; and, prior to experience, there was once a presumption against our own attainments in mature age. And, secondly, the natural immortality of brutes does not imply a moral or rational nature. And all difficulties as to their future disposal are so entirely founded on our ignorance, that it is surprising they should be at all insisted on.

III. As our present powers of reason, memory, and affection, do not depend upon our gross body in the same manner as perception by our organs of sense does; so they do not depend upon it in such a manner as to give us grounds to suppose, that when our bodies perish, our present powers of reflection will be destroyed with our powers of sensation.

Human beings exist in two widely-different states, a state of sensation, and a state of reflection: to the latter of which it does not appear that any thing dissolved by death is necessary after ideas are once gained. For though our external organs are necessary to convey ideas to our reflecting powers, we are clearly capable of reflecting, when these ideas are once gained,

without the assistance of our senses; and so the body is not necessary to thinking. But further, many mortal diseases do not affect our mental powers, and persons immediately before death sometimes exhibit the highest vigour of life. Hence we conclude, that a disease which, during its progress, has not impaired the mental faculties, will not eventually destroy them. This may be carried further, and we may argue from the slight connection between the powers of sensation and reflection, that death which destroys the one does not even suspend the other: and thus our future life will merely be a continuation of our present. Nay, for any thing we know, death may immediately put us into a higher state of life and reflection, just as our birth did: and even granting that death should suspend our active and perceptive powers, suspension by no means implies destruction.

It may be urged, however, that there is an analogy between the decay of plants and the death of living creatures. But this will not hold, because one of the things compared is void of what is the chief thing in the other, the power of perception. As no probability then of a cessation of existence can be inferred from the reason of the thing, so none can be derived from analogy. And thus, when we leave the world, we may pass into new and social scenes, the advantages of which

may be bestowed upon us in proportion to our virtue, by the immediate will of the great Author of Nature.

This credibility of a future life answers all the purposes of religion, and removes objections as well as a demonstrative proof would. For a future life is as consistent with the scheme of Atheism as our present is, and it cannot therefore be argued even from that scheme that there is no futurity.

CHAPTER II.

Of the Government of God by Rewards and Punishments, and particularly of the latter.

THE importance of a future life depends upon the supposition of our state hereafter being regulated by our conduct here. Without this, we might indeed be curious to know our future condition, but reasonable men would take no further interest in the matter. But if our future destiny depends upon our present conduct, we have reason for the most active thought to secure that interest, and so to behave as to obtain the happiness and escape the misery which we believe ourselves capable of, and which we apprehend to be placed in our own power. All our present en-

joyments and a great part of our miseries depend upon ourselves, for pleasure and pain are the foreseen consequences of our actions, and it is only by the exertion of care and forethought that we secure the one and avoid the other: this is the general course of things, though liable to some exceptions. Why the Author of Nature does not confer happiness without reference to our behaviour, is another matter. Perhaps it may be impossible, or less happiness would be the result, or divine goodness may consist in making the virtuous only happy, and God may be pleased with the moral piety of moral agents, both *per se*, and as conducing to the general happiness. It is certain however that the general method of divine government is a forewarning us, that according to and in consequence of our actions we shall severally receive pleasure or pain.

This must be ascribed to the course, or rather to the Author of Nature; and if the natural course of things be ordained by Him, then the good and bad consequences of our actions are intended as a warning how we are to act. We must not however suppose, that the pleasure derived from indulging our passions was designed as a reward for so doing, any more than our eyes are intended to give us the sight of destructive or unseemly objects. And yet we cannot doubt but that as our eyes are given us to see with, so our passions

are implanted in us for the purpose of directing and regulating our actions.

From this general view of foreseen rewards and punishments being consequent upon our actions, we learn that we are at present under God's government in the strictest sense, just indeed as we are under that of civil magistrates: for the annexation of pleasure and pain to voluntary actions, and giving notice of it beforehand, is the proper action of government. Nor does it signify whether this be mediate or immediate: for could the magistrate cause his laws to execute themselves, or the offender to punish himself, we should still be under his government, but in a higher sense. Vain is the ridicule of lesser pains, considered as instances of divine punishment: for deny the general principle, and you deny all final causes: admit them, and pleasure and pain must be admitted as instances of them, by which God clearly rewards and punishes human actions. Thus we find that the true notion of the Author of Nature is that of a Governor, prior to the consideration of His attributes. And hence the analogy of nature bears out the Scripture doctrine of future rewards and punishments, inasmuch as that kind of government is already exercised here below.

But as divine punishment is chiefly objected to, we will next consider some circumstances analo-

gous to what religion teaches. We observed that misery naturally follows vice, and being foreseen must be regarded as a punishment. Indeed this is the principle we contend for, that a great deal of what we suffer might be avoided; that future miseries are consequent upon present advantages, and are often greater than the advantages obtained: that though delayed for a time, they come suddenly at last: and that though such distant misery is not certain, it nevertheless follows in a variety of cases. In like manner, opportunities neglected are frequently lost for ever; and though after we have been guilty of sin and folly up to a certain degree we may reform without much loss, reformation is of no avail in many cases where that degree is exceeded.

These things are not accidental, but of daily experience, and proceed from the general laws by which God governs the world: and they are so analogous to what religion teaches, as to be capable of being expressed in the same words. Nothing indeed gives a better idea of future punishments than this, that after many disregarded warnings the temporal bad consequences of a vicious course break in irresistibly, and overwhelm the wicked beyond the possibility of escape. And although we cannot affirm that men are always punished in proportion to their misbehaviour, the very many instances of this sort

answer all objections against the belief of future punishment.

These reflections though not without their terrors are yet salutary, for there is a recklessness with regard to a future state which nothing but demonstration on the part of Atheism can justify; and men need therefore constantly to be reminded that their presumptions are groundless, even upon the most sceptical principles. May it not be said of some even in a temporal point of view, that it would have been better for them had they never been born? And can we think ourselves so secure, that, whatever be our conduct, there will be nothing analogous to this hereafter under the government of the same God?

CHAPTER III.

Of the Moral Government of God.

ALTHOUGH the appearances of design, and of the particular final causes of pleasure and pain, prove the creation and government of the world by a supreme intelligent Mind; yet this does not at first sight determine any thing with certainty concerning His moral character. Moral government consists in rewarding men according to their actions, as good or evil; and its perfection is its impartiality.

Some have imagined the Author of Nature to be absolutely benevolent, and in this view His justice and truth will be nothing but benevolence conducted by wisdom. We do not here enquire whether this can be proved, but whether a righteous government cannot be discerned in the constitution of the world. There may possibly be beings to whom God thus manifests benevolence, but to us He appears as a righteous Governor, and of His government He has given us clear but not irresistible intimations.

It is indeed allowed that the divine government which we experience is not the perfection of moral government, and yet it by no means follows that there is not sufficient to give us an idea of its future perfection ; sufficient to stimulate our enquiry how far, beside the moral nature which God has given us, the principles of moral government may be discerned amidst the confusion of the world. The satisfaction which attends a virtuous course might here be urged as an instance of a natural moral government, but it is confessedly difficult so to balance pleasure and pain as to give an overplus of happiness to virtue. Still, however, the principles of a righteous government may unquestionably be found. For,

I. As it is matter of experience that God manifests Himself as a Governor, the question arises, Is He a moral Governor? And if so, be the evidence

of religion more or less clear, the expectation of future retribution cannot be deemed absurd, because the method already begun will then be carried on by the rule of distributive justice. Nor,

II. Must we forget the good and bad consequences of a virtuous or vicious career, which attest the right constitution of nature, and plainly imply that prudence and imprudence must be, as they are, respectively rewarded and punished.

III. From the natural course of things, vicious actions, besides causing an alarm to the delinquent from the apprehension of punishment, are actually punished as mischievous to society, and prove that the divine government is carried on by the instrumentality of man. If it be objected that good actions are sometimes punished and evil ones rewarded, we answer that this is neither necessary nor natural, and that good actions are not punished considered as beneficial to society, nor evil ones rewarded, considered as hurtful.

IV. In the natural course of things, virtue *as such* is rewarded, and vice *as such* is punished; a plain proof of a moral government, though not so perfect as religion teaches us to expect. To see this more clearly, we must distinguish between actions and their qualities. The gratification of a natural passion gives pleasure, and an action by which such a passion is indulged procures delight

without reference to its morality. Consequently, to say that an action procured pleasure or pain, is quite different from saying that the good or bad effect was owing to the virtue or vice of such behaviour. In one case, the action *per se* produced its effect; in the other, the morality of the action. Now virtue as such naturally benefits the virtuous, and vice as such occasions misery to the vicious; vice being continually attended with remorse, and virtue with inward satisfaction and peace of mind. And here might be mentioned the hopes and fears of future retribution, which cannot be got rid of even by those who have thought most deeply on the subject.

And next we are to consider the respect paid by the good to good men as such, and also the infamy which attaches to the vicious as such. To this it may be added that in domestic government, which is doubtless natural, children and others are punished for ill behaviour as such and rewarded for the contrary; and that although civil government regards actions merely as they are prejudicial to society, yet still their immorality tends in different ways to bring the offenders to justice, while the entire absence of guilt will almost of course in many cases though not in all procure a remission of the penalties annexed to civil crimes. On the whole, then, besides the good and bad effects of virtue on men's minds, we

find daily instances of virtue being naturally favoured and vice discomtented. The fact of our nature being moral, may be urged as a proof of God's moral government over us : but that this nature has scope to work in, is an additional proof—the first, of final rewards and punishments ; the second, of the working of this system in this present life.

Whence is it then that virtue is thus rewarded and vice punished ? It arises partly from our moral nature, and partly from the power we possess over each other's happiness or misery. For, first, peace of mind is the result of well-doing, never of vicious conduct as such. And, secondly, from our moral nature and our power over each other's happiness or misery, vice must be in some kinds and instances detestable, and therefore punished. But nothing on the side of vice can answer this : for there is nothing in the human mind contradictory to virtue, though there is decidedly to vice.

Happiness and misery are not however always regulated by personal merit or demerit, but are sometimes distributed by way of mere discipline. For the wisest and best reasons the world may be governed by general laws, and our happiness and misery be put to a certain degree in our own power. And though this may sometimes render the wicked prosperous and the righteous afflicted,

yet still the very circumstance of our being so placed that virtue and vice are respectively favoured and discountenanced, is a proof of the intent of nature ; otherwise our mental constitution would be incongruous. But we cannot say that nature intended to reward vicious, and punish virtuous actions, though this sometimes is brought about through the perversion of some natural passion, implanted for other and good purposes which may be clearly seen. We have a declaration from the Author of Nature which side He takes, and so far as we are true to virtue we co-operate with the divine administration ; and thence arises a secret satisfaction, and an implicit hope of something further.

V. This hope is confirmed by the necessary tendencies of virtue and vice to produce their usual effects in a greater degree than at present. These are obvious with respect to individuals, and in a society power allied to virtue has a tendency to prevail over opposite power not so allied, just as power and reason combined will prevail over brute force. Nor is this superiority accidental : for though in the case of reason, which has confessedly this tendency, there must be some proportion between reason and mere power in order to secure the triumph of the former ; still there is a tendency to prevail, notwithstanding a possibility to the contrary and the necessity of

many concurring circumstances to render it prevalent.

Now virtue in a society has a like tendency to procure superiority, by rendering the public good an object of emulation, by exciting individual diligence, and by promoting truth and justice, the main-springs of civil union. And suppose the invisible world analogous to the visible, or that both form one uniform scheme, the derived power throughout the universe under the direction of virtue must have a tendency to prevail over brute force. Yet the same concurrences are necessary as there are for the prevalence of reason, proportion, time, opportunity, union, the absence of which may prevent virtue from being carried into effect in the present state of things. She is in fact militant here below, but hereafter she may have greater advantages, and her sphere may be sufficient for the full developement of her tendencies. Good men may then unite, for virtue is naturally a bond of union, and cannot but recommend the possessors of it to the protection of all virtuous beings throughout the universe. And suppose this tendency of virtue were perceived by any orders of vicious creatures throughout God's kingdom, it might by way of example reform those who were capable of reformation. This hypothesis is brought forward merely to shew, that, although virtue is not dominant here, it

may yet have full scope hereafter : and that its present tendencies may be regarded as declarations of God in its favour.

But to return to earth. Could we suppose a society perfectly virtuous for a succession of ages, what would be the natural result ? Faction would cease, men of mind would rule without envy, each would take the part to which his genius was adapted, the rest would submit to their guidance ; public determinations would result from united wisdom, and be executed by united strength ; all would contribute to the public weal, and each would enjoy the fruits of his own virtue. Add to this the influence which such a kingdom would have over the whole earth by way of example. It would plainly be superior to others, for in Scripture language “ the people would all be righteous, and inherit the land for ever.”

If now we consider that the government of the world is uniform, one, and moral, and that virtue and right will finally prevail under one supreme Governor, it will appear that God has enabled us to see the connexion of the several parts of this scheme, and its tendency towards completion, arising from the very nature of virtue. All this may be deemed unimportant, but what would be said were the contrary the case, and vice had essentially these advantageous tendencies ?

But some may perhaps object, that for ought

we know virtue and vice may hereafter be alternately depressed and prosperous. We answer, it is not the object of this treatise to prove God's perfect moral government, or the truth of religion, but to observe what there is in the course of nature to confirm the proper proof of it supposed to be known; and that the weight of the above remarks may be thus distinctly proved. Pleasure and pain are in great measure distributed without regard to desert; and were nothing else discernible concerning this matter, there might perhaps be no ground for the expectation of future rewards and punishments, though at the same time there would be no reason to believe that vice would on the whole prevail. But the things insisted on above strongly confirm the arguments in proof of a future state of retribution. For,

First, they shew that the Author of Nature is not indifferent to virtue and vice, but has declared so much in favour of the former that we can determine from nature alone the probability of the righteous being rewarded in a future life.

Secondly, when God conformably to what religion teaches shall reward every one according to his deserts in another state of being, this will only be the completion of that moral government of which the principles are now discernible.

Thirdly, from what we experience of the rewards and punishments of virtue and vice respec-

tively, we are led to expect that these rewards and punishments *may be* conferred in a higher degree hereafter. And though this alone is not sufficient ground to think that this *will* eventually be the case, yet, lastly, there is sufficient ground to think so from the essential tendencies of virtue and vice.

On the whole, the notion of a moral government is not fictitious, but natural, suggested by the tendencies above mentioned; and hence arises a presumption, that the moral scheme of government established in nature will hereafter be absolutely completed.

CHAPTER IV.

Of a State of Probation, as implying Trial, Difficulties, and Danger.

THE doctrine of a state of probation evidently implies that our future interest depends upon our present behaviour. Indeed, the notion of a future judgment supposes a temptation to do wrong; otherwise there would be no moral possibility of doing wrong. But the word *probation* expresses more strongly our dangers and trials than the words *moral government*, and therefore requires a separate consideration.

As God's moral government implies a state of

trial with reference to a future world, so does His natural government with reference to the present. Natural government as much implies natural trial, as moral government does moral trial. Hence we perceive how much depends upon ourselves, since in our natural or temporal capacity we are in a state of trial analogous to our moral and religious trial.

Our trial in both capacities must either be external, or in our nature. For, on the one hand, external circumstances may betray us into open misconduct: on the other, vicious persons will gratify their passions from the force of habit and passion. But since external temptations require internal co-operation, so when our passions mislead they are excited by external objects. Hence external and internal temptations imply each other. But since our passions are roused not only in lawful but also in unlawful cases, self-denial is indispensable: and thus mankind, having temporal interests to be secured only by prudence, are urged by passion to forego their real interests for present gratification.

If we observe further how men behave under their trial, both as regards their temporal and spiritual interests, we shall find some insensible of it, others blinded by passion, others following pleasure without any regard to consequences either here or hereafter. It may be added, that as the

difficulties of our religious state of trial arise almost wholly from the bad behaviour of others, so the difficulties of a prudent behaviour with respect to our present interest are increased by a foolish education, by vicious society, and by our own folly, no less than by an open course of sin.

We rank low in the scale of creation, and our condition does not seem the most advantageous for securing our present or future interest. We cannot however justly complain, for as prudence generally leads to ease and satisfaction in our temporal affairs, so religion requires only what we are able to perform. And so our state of trial as taught by religion is credible from its uniformity with the general conduct of providence. Indeed, were our natural condition a state of constant security and happiness, it might seem strange that religion should represent our future interests as dependent upon our present behaviour: and it might be alleged, that our condition hereafter was not analogous to our condition here. But since prudence and self-denial are indispensable to our present comfort and satisfaction, all presumptions are removed against their necessity to secure our higher interest.

CHAPTER V.

*Of a State of Probation, as related to the Moral
Discipline and Improvement of Man.*

THE question now arises, How can we be placed in a state of probation? a question involved in insuperable difficulties. For though some of these difficulties are lessened by observing that all wickedness is voluntary, and that many miseries have apparent good effects: it is confessedly presumptuous to pretend giving an account of the whole reasons of our being placed in a condition from which so much misery and wickedness arise. It is sufficient for us to know, that our present state is in no wise inconsistent with the perfect moral government of God. To the question then which may be further asked, What is our business here? we answer, that we are placed here for our improvement in virtue and piety, as the requisite qualification for our future happiness and security.

Now the beginning of life, considered as an education for mature age, is analogous to our trial for a future life. For,

I. Every species of creatures is designed for that mode of life to which its nature as well as

external circumstances adapt it. Change a man's character to the greatest conceivable degree, and he will be incapable of a human course of life and of human happiness; for our nature corresponds with our external condition, and our life and happiness are the result of both; so that, without determining the particular life of good men hereafter, there must be some determinate capacities without which they would be utterly incapable of realising its happiness.

II. The constitution of creatures is such that they may become qualified for states of life to which they were once unsuited. We are endued with faculties of perception and memory, and are capable not only of acting but of acquiring new facilities of action. This is the power of habit, but neither the perception of ideas nor knowledge are habits, though necessary for their formation. However, the capacities of acquiring knowledge are improved by exercise. Whether the word *habit* applies to all these improvements, I shall not enquire; but that perceptions readily return to the mind after being once received, seems analogous to expertness in other things, which confessedly arises from habit. There are, in fact, mental and bodily habits: under the latter are comprised all bodily motions which are owing to use; under the former, general habits of life and conduct. And as bodily habits are produced by

external acts, so are mental habits by the exertion of inward principles influencing the practice. Mere speculations on virtue, so far from necessarily forming a virtuous habit, may even harden the heart in vice. Hence, as practical habits are formed by repeated acts, and passive impressions grow weaker by repetition : it follows, that active habits may be formed, while the motives that lead to them are less and less felt, as the habits themselves are strengthened. Thus the perception of danger is an excitement of active caution and passive fear : and, by being inured to danger, the former predominates. It appears then to be an appointment of nature that active habits are to be formed by exercise, for the thing is general and a matter of certain experience. Practical principles also, both absolutely and relatively, grow stronger by exercise : and thus a new character is formed, and many habitudes of life are acquired, not indeed given us by nature but such as nature prompts us to acquire.

III. We should never have had this capacity of improving our habits by experience, had they not been necessary for the employment and satisfaction of mature life, for which nature does not qualify us wholly or at once. Mental and bodily strength are only attained gradually : and were a person born with both at full maturity, he would be as unqualified for the human life of mature age as